

# FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT

**Title of Partnership/Project:**

National Park Labs: *Bridging the Watershed*

**Your name:**

Nancy Smaroff, Project Director

**Date:**

November 10, 1999

**Statement of Purpose/Goals of Our Partnership/Project:**

*Bridging the Watershed* is a National Park Labs project established to 1) promote national parks in the Potomac watershed as learning laboratories for secondary teachers and students and support local school curricula in math and science; 2) increase knowledge of the Potomac watershed and recognize the importance of national parks in preserving cultural and natural resources; 3) establish a curriculum model with potential to spread throughout the Potomac watershed and be replicated in other national parks to serve the high school population; and 4) offer students service learning opportunities, Student Conservation Association internships, and other informal experiences in national parks.

**Goals/Objectives for this past quarter: What we said we would do by this date:**

Our goals for the first quarter were: 1) to create a list serve or electronic bulletin board/list-serve for partners, teachers and rangers; 2) to register a web site domain name; 3) confirm NPS host serving logistics; 4) identify a technology team of teachers and park rangers and begin developing and refine interactive on-line modules; and 5) begin pilot testing on-line module.

**What we have done and what we have accomplished:**

1. We created an electronic bulletin board that can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.nps.gov/rocr-watershed>.
2. We continue to have a web site on the Prince George's County Public School's server at <http://www.pgcps.org/~nwest/btw/index.html> and we are not making changes to this web site because we are planning to put our web site on a NPS server.
3. We are currently registering our domain name, *Bridging the Watershed*.
4. A technology team has been identified, we had a kick-off meeting in September and the team is currently working on interactive on-line activities.

**Goals/Objectives for Upcoming Quarter:**

1. To secure a permanent site for our server at one of the national parks in the *Bridging the Watershed* project and purchase all additional hardware and software necessary for interactive on-line
2. To complete curriculum content for on-line activities.
3. To continue concept design and web site development.
4. To conduct informal evaluation of web site activities

**Particular challenges, difficulties, needs:**

A challenging task has been and continues to be finding the location, at a government facility, to house our server and other hardware needed to operate our interactive activities. We have been confronted with the following issues; 1) limited space in an existing government facility, 2) need for existing high speed hardware to accommodate our equipment, and 3) staff to maintain our web site once it has been created.

Another dimension to housing our server at a government facility that has slowed our progress is the amount of time it has taken to communicate with appropriate individuals to resolve issues.

One of the main challenges of the grant is the requirement that most of the funds be paid to teachers for lesson plan development and technology work. Generally speaking teachers do not have the writing skills or the time to create on-line activities. Their expertise lies in classroom presentation.

**Early lessons:**

More and more high school teachers are looking to the Internet to support classroom instruction and they will use a web site if it applies and/or enhances core learning goals. The on-line activities that are being created enhance the classroom curriculum and field experiences students will work with in our *Bridging the Watershed* project. As an example, one interactive activity is learning how to identify plants using a dichotomous plant key. Students learn the basics of plant identification in the classroom and then apply this knowledge in their field experience in a national park.

The electronic bulletin board is a great idea, but getting it is not getting its intended use. Teachers are just too busy to check it and email seems to be the choice of communication for other partners in our project.